

## **Ready-to-Learn Television (CFDA No. 84-295)**

### **I. Legislation**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Title III, Part C (20 U.S.C. 6921-6928) (expires September 30, 1999). The program is administered through a contract to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), created in 1967 by the United States Congress.

### **II. Funding History**

<u><b>Fiscal Year</b></u>	<u><b>Appropriation</b></u>
1995	\$6,996,700
1996	6,440,000

### **III. Analysis of Program Performance**

#### **A. Goals and Objectives**

The purposes of Ready-to-Learn Television are development of: (1) educational programming for preschool and early elementary school children and their families; (2) educational television programming and ancillary materials to increase school readiness for young children in limited-English-proficient households and to increase family literacy; and (3) accompanying support materials and services that promote the effective use of educational programming.

#### **B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals**

##### **Services Supported**

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting awarded \$4.2 million to the Children's Television Workshop (CTW) and Columbia TriStar Television Distribution. The funds are being used to develop 40 episodes of "Dragon Tales," a daily animated half-hour preschool series to help children develop life skills necessary for learning. "Show and Tell Me," the related weekly series, is designed to educate parents and care givers about ways they can help their children become ready to learn. The CTW will also produce a series of "Parenting Moments," brief between-program spots for television and radio, along with an interactive Internet component for children, parents, and other caregivers.

CPB is also providing \$4.2 million to the public broadcaster WGBH Boston, in partnership with Sirius Thinking, Inc., to develop and co-produce 40 episodes of an innovative half-hour daily literacy series, "Between the Lions," for 4 to 7 year olds. In addition, WGBH will produce a related 13-part weekly half-hour series, "Kids and How to Grow Them," for parents and caregivers, along with an interactive online component for the Internet. Also, \$1.2 million was awarded to Educational Publishing Group, Inc. of Boston, Massachusetts, in association with WGBH, to create and publish PTV Families and Para la Familia through the project period (also available on CPB and PBS websites). These free, bimonthly publications provide ideas about how to enhance the learning of preschool and early elementary school children.

Department of Education funds have also been used to expand CPB's "First Book," a free book program for disadvantaged children. The Ready-to-Learn Advisory Board was formed to provide a range of expertise and an ongoing contextual perspective of the project.

### **C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness**

Ready-to-Learn seeks to enhance the learning and development of young children and their families through educational television programming. Public television programs are available at no cost to virtually all Americans. The latest audience statistics indicate 96,990,000 people tune in to public television on a weekly basis. Of these, 21,625,000 are children and half are between the ages of two and five. The television programs that are being developed are scheduled to premiere in the 1998-1999 broadcasting season.

The program has also expanded CPB's local educational and community outreach activities from three PBS stations to 95 stations. Through the "First Book" program, these stations have distributed more than 650,000 books to disadvantaged children. In addition to providing a regular allotment of free books to these stations on a monthly basis, a matching book fund has been established to encourage stations to purchase additional books. Many stations have ordered these books in Spanish, English, and other languages. (V.1)

## **IV. Planned Studies**

PBS is in the process of commissioning research to focus on the educational value of workshops and follow-up provided by Ready To Learn Coordinators. The research will include studies with childcare providers, early childhood educators, parents, preschool children, and school-aged children. The design will assess participants both before and after participation in Ready To Learn, will compare Ready To Learn participants with non-Ready To Learn participants, and will verify accuracy of self-reporting. There are also studies planned to survey parents as to their perceptions of the effectiveness of "Between the Lions" and "Dragon Tales." The expected dates for the reports on these studies are March 2000 and December 1999, respectively.

## **V. Sources of Information**

1. Program files.

## **VI. Contacts for Further Information**

Program Operations: Joe Caliguro, (202) 219-1596

Program Studies: Tracy Rimdzius, (202) 401-1958